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ABSTRACT

Several studies have compared male and female college students on their attitudes about women, while other studies have assessed the attitudes of elementary and secondary school students and of adults. No studies were found in which measurements had been taken in one community over an extended period of time. To examine possible attitude changes over time, attitudes of children and their parents in one community were compared over a 10-year period. In spring 1974, a random sample of junior high school girls and boys and their parents completed a questionnaire modeled after the Attitudes Toward Women Scale. The 1974 sample consisted of 30 girls, 30 boys, 29 mothers, and 24 fathers. In fall 1983, data were collected with the same instrument at the same school. A two-way analysis of variance was used to summarize data from eight groups (girls, boys, mothers, and fathers in 1974 and 1983). The results indicated significant main effects for groups and for time. Girls in 1983 showed no differences in their attitudes when compared with girls in 1974. The groups of boys, mothers, and fathers in 1983, however, all had significantly higher means than these groups sampled in 1974. Since higher scores are indicative of a less traditional attitude than lower scores, the finding that three groups scored higher in 1983 suggests that some changes are occurring in views of female roles. (NRB)

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Title: Youth and Parent Perceptions of Female Roles One
Decade Apart

Abstract: A 1983 study of junior high school student and parent attitudes about female roles showed significant changes when compared to a 1974 study.

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A resurgence of interest in attitudes about girls and women occurred in the late 1960's especially regarding work and sex roles. Continuing through much of the 70's, the National Organization of Women and other interested groups were pressing for passage of the equal rights ammendment. Formation of affirmative action policies and procedures occurred in both public and private sectors. In the 1980's, attitudes people hold individually and in groups about girls and women continue to be of concern, with articles citing male-female salary differentials appearing regularly.

In the last 20 years, several studies have compared women and men college students on their attitudes about girls and women. In 1972, The Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS) by Spence and Helmreich appeared. It was the first scale since the 1930's specifically designed to measure attitudes about roles of girls and women. In the development sample at the University of Texas at Austin, Spence and Helmreich (1972) found students to be more liberal than their parents, and females to be more liberal than males. This scale, like several others appearing later, was designed such that a higher score indicates a more positive or liberal attitude. In a replication study, Whitcraft (1974) found similar differences among students at the University of Wyoming. Six years later at the same university, Peterson (1980) used the AWS short form also developed by Spence and Helmreich (1972) and found similar differences. Wingrove and Slevin (1982) found college women to be significantly more liberal than their mothers on all six sub-scales of the AWS. In one of the few longitudinal studies conducted, college

students who had completed the AWS in 1973-74 repeated it two years later. Means for both women and men increased. In both administrations, the women's mean was about one standard deviation above the mean for the men (Etaugh and Spandikow, 1981).

Younger students' attitudes also have been assessed. For example, Bush, Simmons, Hutchinson and Blyth (1978) compared 1974-75 data collected in Milwaukee with 1968 data collected in Baltimore. Subjects were sixth- and seventh-grade students. The authors concluded that girls demonstrated fewer changes about themselves and their sex roles than might have been expected given the social scene then. By contrast, using data from five surveys taken between 1964 and 1974, Mason, Czajka and Arber (1976) found that women in the mid 1970's held considerably more egalitarian views than did women in the mid-1960's. Researchers have found girls to hold more liberal attitudes than boys when the persons sampled were ninth graders (Entwisle & Greenberg, 1972; Jack and Fitzgibbons, 1979) high school seniors (O'Toole, 1976), sixth graders (Metcalf, 1977), eighth graders (Chandler, Sawicki & Stryffler, 1981), and students in grades 4, 6, 8, and 10 (Greenberg, 1978). Generally, girls indicated greater acceptance of non-traditional roles for both women and men.

Shepard and Hess (1975) collected data from kindergarten, eighth-grade, college, and adult groups. In the three older groups, females exhibited a much more liberal view than males. Both sexes seemed inclined to admit women to prestige occupations but men were much less liberal minded about having child-caring and household tasks

performed by both sexes. These findings suggest that women may have improved occupational opportunities, but are still expected simultaneously to fill traditional home management and child rearing roles. Equity appeared to be qualified in the minds of the men respondents.

Generally, then, older people have tended to display less liberal views than younger girls and women, and males generally show less favorable views than females. However, no studies were found in which measurements have been taken in one community over an extended period of time. The study here compared attitudes of children and their parents in one community over a ten-year period.

Procedures

Lukasik (1974) developed a 20-item opinionnaire modeled after the AWS. Each item was written to be easily understood by junior high school students. Scoring was on a 1 to 5 Likert scale, with the most favorable response assigned the value of 5. Ten items were phrased in a positive direction; 10 were phrased in the negative direction. Scores can range from 20 to 100. Raw scores are used for all calculations.

A random sample of girls and boys was taken in early Spring, 1974 from each of grades seven, eight and nine in a junior high school. After permissions were obtained, students were contacted personally and asked to complete the inventory. They also were asked to take the instrument home with a written request that the parent(s) complete the same form and have their child return it. The 1974 sample contained responses from 30 girls, 30 boys, 29 mothers and 24 fathers. In late

Fall, 1983, data were collected with the same instrument at the same school. Administration methods were the same except that after parent permission was obtained, a stamped, addressed envelope was sent home with the instrument(s) for parent completion and responses were mailed to one of the authors instead of being returned to school by the student. As in 1974, students did the opinionnaire during school hours and were supervised by one of the researchers.

In 1974 the population of the community was about 22,000. It increased to about 25,000 in 1983, with the junior high school growing proportionately. The town and county probably was typical of many such communities with the exception of characteristics associated with the presence of an insitution of higher education.

Results

Means and standard deviations from the two assessment periods for eight groups (girls, boys, mothers, and fathers in 1974 and 1983) are in Table 1. A two-way (2 x 4) analysis of variance was used to summarize the data. These results are shown in Table 2.

Insert Table 1 and Table 2 about here.

A significant main effect for groups was found. Also, a significant main effect for time was found, with scores from 1983 higher than those collected in 1974, except for those from girls. The findings of most interest were the differences between groups of boys, mothers and fathers over the decade. Figure 1 is a graphic display of the eight

group means, four from each year. Differences between the samples of mothers, fathers and boys over the two times are quite apparent.

Insert Figure 1 about here.

Girls in 1983 showed no differences in their attitudes when compared with girls in 1974. However, the groups of boys, mothers and fathers in 1983 all had higher means than these groups sampled in 1974. Using the Scheffe' procedure for pairwise comparisons (Guenther, 1964), all three of these contrasts were significant ($p < .05$).

Discussion

Since higher scores are indicative of a less traditional attitude than lower scores, finding three groups scoring higher in 1983 suggests that some real changes are occurring in views of female roles. The fact that the mothers in 1983 scored higher than the girls, though not statistically significantly so, may be indicative of a changing home environment for both boys and girls. The differences in the fathers' means supports this inference. While one could be pessimistic about the relatively lower scores of males in 1983 as compared to females, the differences from 1974 are in the direction indicating a more egalitarian perception.

The standard deviations are quite homogeneous, with one exception. Raw scores from girls in 1983 form a more homogeneous group, with this difference in distribution due to an absence of high scores. This aspect of the 1983 results was not expected and is not readily

explained. The possibility of a ceiling effect is ever present in a short instrument. But the presence of scores in the 90 to 100 range in the other three 1984 groups suggests any ceiling effect was not a factor in the girls' scores. A more likely speculation is that girls in the mid-1980's may have a tendency to be less optimistic about opportunities for equitable experiences. Or are they more realistic than the more liberal members of the other three groups?

A likely and reasonable explanation of these results, consistent with the results of Mason, Czajka and Arber (1976) and Etaugh and Spandikow (1981), is that presently people are regarding roles for girls and women more favorably than a decade ago. Girls and women in the 1980's may find a more encouraging environment than apparently existed even ten years ago, judging from several studies cited above. The differences between females and males, which were similar in both years, seem to indicate that girls will be facing some difficulties with stereotypes, though probably these will be less severe than those their mothers and grandmothers encountered. Perhaps these trends toward more liberal attitudes will continue, with men and boys developing views more nearly congruent with those of girls and women. Counselors and other school personnel can expect more support from the adult world, including parents, in the form of more liberal attitudes. However, the lack of increase in the girls' scores is cause for concern. How counselors can influence the young female to develop and expand her abilities will require constant attention if she is to benefit from an improving environment. Perhaps by the mid-1990's the environments of people of

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both sexes will truly provide equal opportunity and equal treatment.

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Table 1: Means and standard deviations for groups of students and parents who returned the attitudes about girls and women opinionnaire in 1974 and in 1983.

Group	Mean			Standard Deviation		
	1974	1983	Combined	1974	1983	Combined
Girls	79.90	79.48	79.70	8.10	5.42	6.90
Boys	65.20	72.11	68.47	8.34	8.04	8.84
Mothers	72.86	81.62	77.94	8.29	9.25	9.82
Fathers	65.88	71.97	69.39	9.54	8.19	9.23

Years	71.17	76.60	74.04	10.38	9.09	10.07

Table 2: Comparisons of groups of girls, boys, mothers and fathers from 1973 and 1984 in their responses to an opinionnaire about girls and women, using a two-way analysis of variance procedure.

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Groups	5919.644	3	1973.215	28.82	< .01
Years	1781.074	1	1781.074	26.01	< .01
Interaction	725.528	3	241.843	3.53	< .05
Error	16021.342	234	68.467		
Total	24447.587	241			

Figure 1: Display of means of responses to the opinionnaire about girls and women by the girls, boys, mothers and fathers in 1973 and 1984.

